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# A long and winding road to Bundeena

by Nick Galvin

Jade Waite's journey to becoming head chef at Bundeena Community & Services Club is a long and surprising story involving legendary British band The Kinks, bass player John Entwistle from The Who and a slew of other rock music icons.

When she was just an infant London-born Jade, now 32, moved to Florida with her mother and stepfather – who happened to be the tour manager for The Kinks, one of the biggest bands of the era.

Touring around the US and beyond, mum Marie managed the catering for the band and other superstars, including Phil Collins and The Who.

"I was a child and I don't remember much," says Jade. "It was rock and roll. I vaguely remember sleeping on tour buses and hanging around backstage."

She also helped out with the catering, unwittingly laying the ground work for her future career.

After her stepfather became ill, the family moved back to England where for four years they shared John Entwistle's Gloucestershire mansion.

Something of a wild child after the rock and roll years, the young Jade saw school as mostly optional.

"I skipped school a lot," she says. "And that was when I guess I got into cooking because the school was like, 'If you're not going to go to school you can go and do cooking at college', so we did catering at a special school for naughty kids."

**“Almost instantly, Jade fell in love with cooking.”**

"I think I loved the pressure of it and the craziness. I'd find sitting behind a desk boring. You'd go days without eating and sleeping and then you'd go in and start cooking again. Not any more though – I'm older and smarter and get home and go to bed with a cup of tea."



**Head Chef Jade Waite**

Jade learned her trade on the job in a series of roles around the UK before deciding it was time to make it official and get her qualifications.

"I did my apprenticeship when I was 25 but I'd been working in kitchens since I was 13. I really put my head down and got the pieces of paper. And then it was like, 'OK, what can I do now?' How about coming to Australia?"

She migrated here to join her brother and, after six months at popular Cronulla restaurant Zimzala she came to Bundeena, lured by the chance to work in a brand-new club, which was just about to re-open after the catastrophic 2015 fire.

And instantly she fell in love with the beachside village.

"It's paradise," she says. "As soon as I came I bonded with the locals. It's my sort of town."

After three years working with now executive chef Michael Sturgess, Jade is thrilled to have been appointed head chef.

So what has she learned about locals and tourists and what they like to eat?

"I do find people get bored here very easily," she says. "You've got to be on your toes and make up specials. So that's what I've been working on for the past few years."

And that experience has been invaluable to Jade in designing the popular new menu unveiled when the club re-opened after lockdown.

"I do know what people want here. I know what sells and what hasn't so I had a head start."

Some favourites of course had to stay - roast pumpkin salad, fish and chips and rump steak. But among the successful innovations have been the hand-stretched flatbreads.

"We didn't have them and I brought them out as a snacky thing and they have absolutely blown up," says Jade. "People love the different flavours." Then there are the ribs.

"We'd go out of town to get ribs but it's a long way to go so I was like, 'Let's bring the ribs here'. And then there is the peri peri chicken. I like roast chickens and I love a good feed. If you're hungry we've got the rib and chicken combo. If you don't know what to have just have both."

The new menu also features a lot more fresh seafood and Jade has arranged extra deliveries to Bundeena to ensure her supplies are as fresh as possible.

**“ paella - it's probably one of our biggest sellers.**



So, what would she order from her own menu?

"It's hard when you cook all the time," she says.

"Probably the paella. I did live in Spain for a year so I know a bit about paella - it's probably one of our biggest sellers."

But like most chefs who spend their days creating complicated dishes, when she's off duty and at home, Jade keeps it simple - very simple.

"I love noodles out of the packet!" she says.



**Jade making her delicious flatbreads**